



**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
JOHN McHUGH, NEW YORK
CHAIRMAN**

PRESS RELEASE

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**Chairmen McHugh Holds Hearing to Assess Criteria,
Consistency and Timeliness of Valor Awards and Decorations**

Washington, D.C. -- Today, the Military Personnel Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee held a hearing to assess the criteria and timeliness of the awarding of medals and decorations.

Military Personnel Subcommittee Chairman John McHugh (R-NY) who chaired the hearing reiterated the importance of recognizing those who perform valiantly and heroically while serving our country. "...I am continuously amazed at the heroic and self sacrificing actions by the young men and women of our military who are serving in the ongoing war against terrorism. They are true heroes and it is important that we recognize them for their valor with the proper awards and decorations," he said.

Chairman McHugh added that today's hearing would address some concerns regarding the issuance of those awards. "I know the Department of Defense is currently conducting a comprehensive review of military awards. That's a good, good first step; however, I also think it is important that we discuss here today some of the issues and concerns that have been raised recently regarding valor awards," he said. Several of those concerns include whether or not criteria for awarding the medals is consistent across the branches and consistent with the criteria used during past wars or conflicts; whether unnecessary bureaucracy hinders the timely administration of the medal; and in the case of the Medal of Honor, whether the criteria unknowingly or implicitly stipulates that the recipient can only receive the award posthumously.

In his opening remarks, Chairman McHugh cited statistics that illustrate that a far few number of valor awards have been given than in previous conflicts such as WWII or Vietnam. "...Since the end of the Vietnam War only four men have been awarded the Medal of Honor, all for actions that cost them their lives... This recent trend of the award of the Medal of Honor only to those who have died, contrasts with our experience in other wars."

Testifying on behalf of the Department of Defense, Michael Dominguez, Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, told members that "Leaders within DOD join with you in recognizing how truly important awards and decorations are to the heritage and traditions of our military services and to the men and women who serve." He also added, "These awards form a special and timeless bridge linking those who serve now with the heroes of yesterday and with those who will serve tomorrow. All of these warriors – yesterday's, today's and tomorrow's – expect us to get it right and to preserve the integrity of these awards and this the bridge that connects to past to the present to the future. This is a weighty responsibility." The DOD review is expected to be released in May, 2007.

Vice Admiral John C. Harvey, Jr, Chief of Naval Personnel, echoed Dominguez' s comments by stressing that the Navy was committed to consistency, timeliness and fairness in its award program and highlighted efforts made by the Navy to streamline and expedite the awards process. "Our sailors are performing extremely well around the globe and I am confident...that their extraordinary accomplishments are being appropriately recognized through personal and unit decorations and awards consistent with their actions and service." Later, Admiral Harvey added, "Timeliness of initial award submission is key to how quickly the awards will be approved and presented to the honorees. Again, timeliness is a big deal for us."

Members also received testimony from the Marine Corps, Army and Air Force as well as from decorated former Marines who have spearheaded public efforts to highlight the heroism of those who have served. Joseph Kinney answered in response to the rhetorical question "Where have all our heroes gone?" that they are around us. "They are just down the street from us." He added, "We need more military heroes."

Chairman Duncan Hunter (R-CA) who was present at the Subcommittee hearing, noted that today's hearing was the last hearing to be chaired by Representative McHugh this Congress and thanked Chairman McHugh for his service and "total dedication" to the men and women in uniform.

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